

DSP Automation Enhancements (ASSIST)

September 2001

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DSP Automation Enhancements (ASSIST)

CURRENT SITUATION

ASSIST (Acquisition Streamlining and Standardization Information System) is a database system for DoD-wide standardization document information and management. The Department of Defense Single Stock Point (DODSSP), an activity of the Defense Automation and Production Service (DAPS), in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, maintains the ASSIST database.

Easily accessible through the World Wide Web, ASSIST provides the DoD standardization community with on-line access to information associated with DoD standardization documents, and it is a critical tool for standardization document management and distribution. Among other things, the ASSIST

- ◆ supports document management functions with various management information and reports,
- ◆ provides users with such useful data as points of contacts and standardization project numbers, and
- ◆ serves as the official repository for DoD standardization documents.

ASSIST is the culmination of progressive efforts by the DoD to capture, maintain, index, and distribute standardization documents and related information to support Defense acquisition. ASSIST has continued to evolve to meet the needs of its users, with funds provided annually by the military departments and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) specifically designated for new applications.

The DODSSP maintains an on-going list of proposed ASSIST enhancements based on feedback from users, suggestions by DAPS managers, and proposals from the contractor system development team. Each year, the highest priority enhancements are funded. Generally, these priorities are set by the DSPO, in consultation with the Departmental Standardization Offices (DepSOs) and DAPS. Typically, DepSOs are asked to nominate their highest priority enhancements. No attempt has been made to prioritize the entire list.

DEFINITION OF NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

Considering its current role in supporting the standardization community, as well as its current level of functionality, the ASSIST should serve as an integral part of a streamlined standardization document development and coordination process.

The IPT reviewed the complete list of proposed ASSIST enhancements, proposed some additional enhancements, and prioritized and ranked all enhancements based on its benefit to the standardization document development and coordination process. Because individual IPT members further solicited comments from others within their parent organizations, the list represents the consensus recommendations of a much larger group of users than may have been reflected in previous years. The DepSOs, many of whom actively participated on the IPT, ratified this prioritized list.

This document contains the current prioritized list of ASSIST enhancements agreed to by the IPT (Appendix A) and recommends that a process be implemented to allow for greater user involvement in annually setting priorities for ASSIST enhancements after this IPT has been disbanded.

The IPT also considered other DSP automation issues. Four issues were considered to be of sufficient importance that they are addressed in three separate Tabs within this report:

- ◆ Tab D1.01 addresses the requirements for electronic document development and coordination,
- ◆ Tab D1.02 describes the need for and recommends the development of a Weapon System Impact Tool,
- ◆ Tab D1.09 suggests some changes to the ASSIST database and some linkages from the ASSIST to other databases to improve the management of International Standardization Agreements, and
- ◆ Tab C1 also contains recommendations that would affect the future of DSP automation in its discussion of an Information Exchange System (IES), also referred to as the DSP [Web] Portal.

Observation #1

As the DoD standardization community comes to depend more and more on the ASSIST, deficiencies in the system become more noticeable; also, greater use of the system enables users to better define additional requirements. Many requirements already have been identified (see Appendix A: Prioritized List of ASSIST Enhancements). Some have been funded and are on schedule for development and delivery (see Appendix B: Implementation Schedule), but other proposed enhancements are pending future funding. These incremental enhancements to existing ASSIST functionality leverage on-going ASSIST investments.

Observation #2

In recent years, the DSPO solicited input only from the DepSOs on the top priorities for ASSIST enhancements. A list of all proposed enhancements, with estimated costs, was not available to all interested DoD users. This IPT was able to generate much greater user involvement in setting priorities for future ASSIST enhancements. Although this IPT soon will conclude its work and disband, there remains a continuing need to engage users in shaping the development of this key DSP tool. The DSPO also should seek to engage more users in making decisions regarding other DSP automation initiatives.

Observation #3

All DSP automation efforts, not only ASSIST, could be improved by involving more users in the evaluation and prioritization process. This process should include efforts to alert the broad group of potential interested users, as well as a more structured focus group to meet and discuss requirements and priorities for DSP automation. We describe this concept in the following section.

CONCEPT OVERVIEW

1. Annual alert of DSP automation enhancements made available via IES Portal.

DSPO establishes baseline. DSPO prepares the baseline list of proposed enhancements from the unfunded projects on the previous year's list. The baseline list also includes new requirements identified by users (e.g., from ASSIST-Feedback), by the DODSSP or DSPO, or by the commercial developer(s).

Standardization community provides feedback via IES Portal.

2. DSP Automation Group meets annually to develop new suggested priorities.

Composition of Group. The DSP Automation Group will consist of a DSPO Chair, the DepSOs, DAPS, and at least one other user from the military departments and the defense agencies, and any other invited representatives. Military departments and defense agencies may send additional representatives.

DSPO will consider funding travel/TDY costs of attending the annual DSP Automation Group meeting on a case-by-case basis for no more than one military department or defense agency representative. Costs to support the participation of additional representatives must be borne by the owning organizations.

Members of the DSP Automation Group also might be expected to participate in various automation process and technology symposia and workshops to receive and share automation ideas that enhance DSP capabilities.

3. Priority given to proposed enhancements that map to strategic documents.

Method of evaluation and prioritization. When prioritizing the current list of proposed enhancements, IPT members were asked to rate each enhancement on a scale of 1 to 5. The weighted averages were calculated and the IPT members discussed scores where there were wide variances amongst the members to ensure that all members had a clear understanding of the requirement behind the proposed enhancement. An attempt was made to achieve consensus in setting the final assigned score (which translated to priority ranking). A similar process is envisioned for the annual DSP Automation Group meeting.

Criteria for ranking enhancements. Group members will be asked to consider some key criteria when considering their rankings. For example, some proposed automation changes might be mandatory to comply with law or policy (e.g., increasing security or user accessibility). In such cases, those enhancements will be given the highest priority. Following are some other key criteria:

- ◆ Enhancements that reduce the operations and maintenance costs of Standardization Management Activities;
- ◆ Enhancements that improve reliability or integrity of data;
- ◆ Enhancements that lower database operational and support costs at the DODSSP;
- ◆ Enhancements that benefit the most users;
- ◆ Enhancements that directly support the objectives of the DSP Strategic Plan; and
- ◆ Enhancements that clearly support the objectives of the Joint Material Performance Standards Roadmap.

In every case, what is desirable will be tempered by a consideration of what is technologically and reasonably achievable. To that end, representatives of the contracting partners will be invited to attend the annual meeting.

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4. Institutionalize the DSP Automation Group process.

DSPO should charter the DSP Automation Group with a numbered policy memorandum and should incorporate the new policy in the next revision of DoD 4120.24-M. This change should include a copy of the process diagram in Appendix C.

5. Respond to customers and customers' needs.

Customers within the DoD should submit requested changes through their respective DepSO. All users (DoD and non-DoD) also may submit recommended enhancements via the ASSIST-Feedback.

6. Suggest solutions to satisfy customers' needs.

As directed by the DODSSP or the DSPO, or at their own initiative, the commercial developer(s) will suggest solutions (with an estimate of the necessary development costs) to the DSPO. These will be added to the next cycle of proposed enhancements.

7. Assess value of solution to customer community and DoD.

The DSP Automation Group will weigh the value of each enhancement to the overall DSP community when establishing the priorities for enhancements.

8. Retain role of DSP in solution.

DSPO will retain the right to fund projects from DSPO funds, at their discretion, whether or not such projects are on the list of enhancements. In most cases, such projects will be undertaken to meet high priority needs not identified in time for the annual prioritization cycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1

As added funds are made available, DAPS should contract for the development of ASSIST enhancements that benefit the document development and coordination business process, following the prioritized list in Appendix A.

Recommendation #2

The DSP should implement a process that facilitates greater user involvement in resetting priorities for future DSP automation enhancements. The process should include dissemination of an annual notification of proposed automation enhancements via the IES portal and an annual meeting of a DSP Automation Group to evaluate and prioritize the proposed enhancements. This process should be de-

scribed and included as an Appendix to DoD 4120.24-M. (A proposed process is described and shown in the flowchart in further detail in Appendix C.)

Recommendation #3

The DSP should establish a process for a DSP Automation Group in time to establish a priority list of enhancements for the FY 2003 budget cycle.

Appendix A

Prioritized List of ASSIST Enhancements

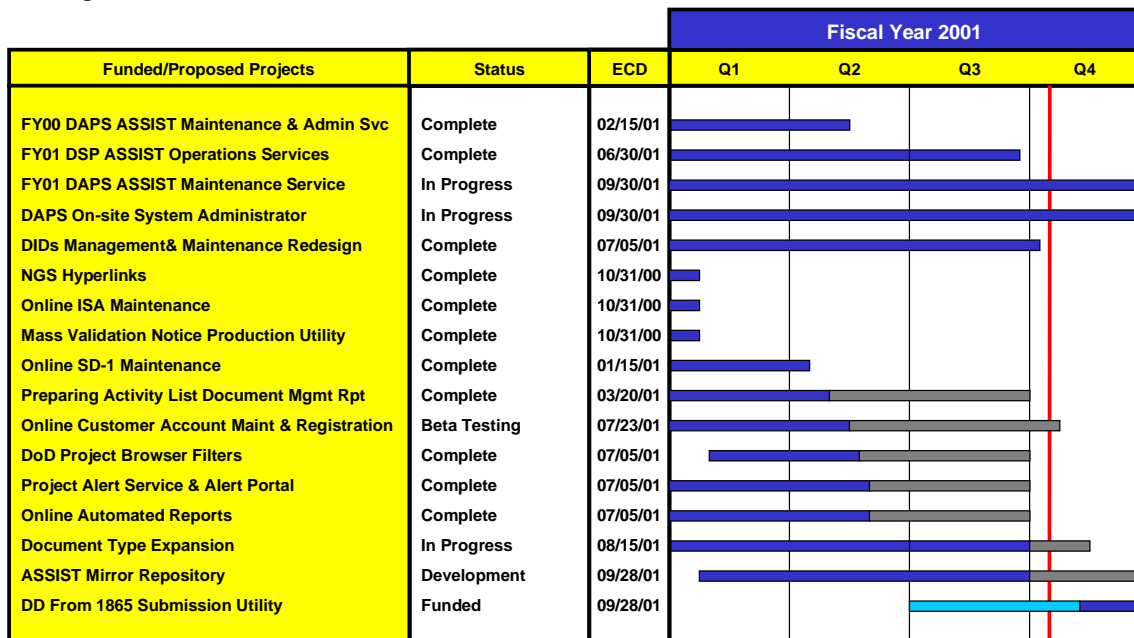
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Appendix B

Implementation Schedule

















Project Schedule






* Other efforts accomplished under separate tasking

LEGEND	
	Task Start Slip
	Task Progress
	Task Completion Slip

Project Schedule

			Fiscal Year 2001			
Funded/Proposed Projects	Status	ECD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
PDF SD1 Production	Development	08/31/01				
Engineer Information Indexing/ Project Number	Funded	09/28/01				
Assignment Utility	Funded	09/28/01				
Document Number Assignment Utility	Development	08/06/01				
Extended Validation Notice Utility	Funded	12/21/01				
Online Document Profile Screen Modification	Funded	07/30/01				
Secure Server Certificates	Funded	09/28/01				
IMS/WMS Interface	Awarded	09/15/01				
Program Manager's Tool	Awarded	10/31/01				
Qualification Design	Awarded	12/28/01				
FY01 DSP Program Support Continuation	Proposal Prep					

* Other efforts accomplished under separate tasking

LEGEND	
	Task Start Slip
	Task Progress
	Task Completion Slip

Appendix C
DSP Automation Enhancements Requirements
Development Process

Thursday, September 20, 2001

